

Environmental News Clips – Week ending October 21, 2016

[HYPERLINK "<http://www.wandtv.com/story/33426777/locals-and-fifth-and-hill-are-finally-receiving-help-from-the-us-epa>"]

Locals Who Live in the Fifth and Hill Area are Receiving Help From the U.S. EPA

By: Meredith Hackler

More than an eye sore, an empty lot in Campaign is a health hazard, people in a Champaign neighborhood say a former gas plant is producing toxic vapors and they have waited long enough for something to be done.

What seems like a normal private lot, poses a much larger risk to the community of Fifth and Hill.

"Test data from Amerens own tests showed that there was a problem," said Claudia Lennhoff Executive Director of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers.

Locals that live in the neighborhood have been working for 9 years, to get answers.

"It was shocking to them because many residents that are home owners did not know that for 20 year prior to that meeting that the Ameran property had been listed as a toxic site under the Illinois EPA voluntary site remediation program, "added Claudia.

Those who live next to the toxic site want Ameren to clean up their mess.

"There were a lot of kids and elderly people living in the area and i have a real concern because i had heard about the health issues that they were having," Said Jerry Lewis a resident of the community.

Several people who live in the are have reported to Claudia that they have un-explained sicknesses.

"I think it's a travesty that it has taken 9 years to get to the point where residence homes are finally being tested," stated Claudia.

The meeting Monday night encouraged all community members to get their homes tested.

"Any residents who are concerned about whether they might have toxic vapors in their home. We want them to come to the meeting on Thursday evening because the U.S. EPA will explain to them how they can go about getting their home tested, " said Claudia.

The meeting for home owners to speak with representatives from the EPA is Thursday October 20th at 6:30. For more information call the Champaign County Health Care Consumers at (217) 352-6533.

Ameren sent us a statement saying:

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"Ameren is meeting its responsibility to remove production waste left over from the 3.5-acre manufactured gas plant site it inherited from Illinois Power. This work has been conducted with oversight from the Illinois EPA. More than 90% of the site has been successfully cleaned-up and the project will be completed this fall. Ameren steadfastly disagrees with the assertion that there is widespread contamination from the MGP site in the 5th & Hill neighborhood. In fact, investigations by Ameren and the U.S. EPA identified impacts from a former bulk petroleum storage facility located at the intersection of 5th and Washington Streets. Ameren welcomes the U.S. EPA investigation and expects that it will confirm that widespread contamination, if any, in the 5th and Hill neighborhood is not related to the manufactured gas plant site."

[[HYPERLINK "http://www.illinoishomepage.net/news/local-news/federal-epa-coming-to-sample-home-for-toxins"](http://www.illinoishomepage.net/news/local-news/federal-epa-coming-to-sample-home-for-toxins)]

Federal EPA coming to sample homes for toxins

By Anna Carrera | [[HYPERLINK "mailto:acarrera@wcia.com"](mailto:acarrera@wcia.com) \t "_blank" \o "Send Email"]

Published 10/18 2016 07:45PM

Updated 10/19 2016 09:30AM

CHAMPAIGN, Ill.

CHAMPAIGN -- People may finally get some answers about toxins in their homes. It's a situation they've dealt with for years. Now the federal EPA is coming to investigate the neighborhood near 5th and Hill streets. People who live in the area say they know the issue is there.

The east Champaign neighborhood may not look any different from most, but people who live here say the lot next to them has caused some major problems.

"Fumes come off of that," said resident M.D. Pelmore. "When it rains, if your basement gets damp or wet or something like that, you can smell it very, very heavy."

Pelmore says those smells are toxic. He built his home in 1980. In the years which followed, he noticed serious changes.

"My wife got sick and passed away," said Pelmore. "I believe it was from part of that stuff, but at the time, we didn't know it. Couldn't prove it."

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Claudia Lennhoff, executive director of Champaign County Health Care Consumers, says now they have proof.

"This is a site that's registered with the Illinois EPA and we've been working for nine years to get this neighborhood cleaned up," said Lennhoff.

There used to be a gas plant on the lot. Even though it's been closed for decades, community leaders say it's been linked to all kinds of health issues.

Ameren owns the land now. Even though workers have cleaned the property, it's looked pretty much the same for years. Lennhoff says the problems are still there.

"We know toxic chemicals have spread out in the neighborhood and are possibly affecting people in their homes, but we've never been able to get any traction to see what we can do to help the residents who live here and are affected by this," said Lennhoff.

A big announcement Tuesday should give people hope. The federal EPA will be coming to town Thursday to tell people how they can get their homes tested for toxic vapors.

If the homes have toxins, the EPA can install pumps to make the air better to breathe for free. It may take a few more months, but Lennhoff says she hopes it will make their neighborhood safer.

The meeting is Thursday, 6:30 pm, at Presence Covenant Medical Center Auditorium, 1400 West Park Street, in Urbana. Anyone who lives in the neighborhood or owns property in the neighborhood is encouraged to attend.

Brian Bretsch, an Ameren Illinois spokesperson, had this to say:

Ameren is meeting its responsibility to remove production waste left over from the 3.5-acre manufactured gas plant site it inherited from Illinois Power. This work has been conducted with oversight from the Illinois EPA. More than 90% of the site has been successfully cleaned-up and the project will be completed this fall. Ameren steadfastly disagrees with the assertion that there is widespread contamination from the MGP site in the 5th & Hill neighborhood. In fact, investigations by Ameren and the U.S. EPA identified impacts from a former bulk petroleum storage facility located at the intersection of 5th and Washington Streets. Ameren welcomes the U.S. EPA investigation and expects that it will confirm that widespread contamination, if any, in the 5th and Hill neighborhood is not related to the manufactured gas plant site.

[[HYPERLINK "http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060044234"](http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060044234)]

CLIMATE: EPA blasts FERC reviews, seeks 'definitive resolution'

[[HYPERLINK "http://www.eenews.net/staff/Hannah_Northey"](http://www.eenews.net/staff/Hannah_Northey)], E&E reporter

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Greenwire: Thursday, October 13, 2016

A \$1.4 billion natural gas project TransCanada Corp. has proposed in the heart of the Marcellus and Utica shale plays is pitting two federal agencies against each other over the depth and need for federal climate reviews.

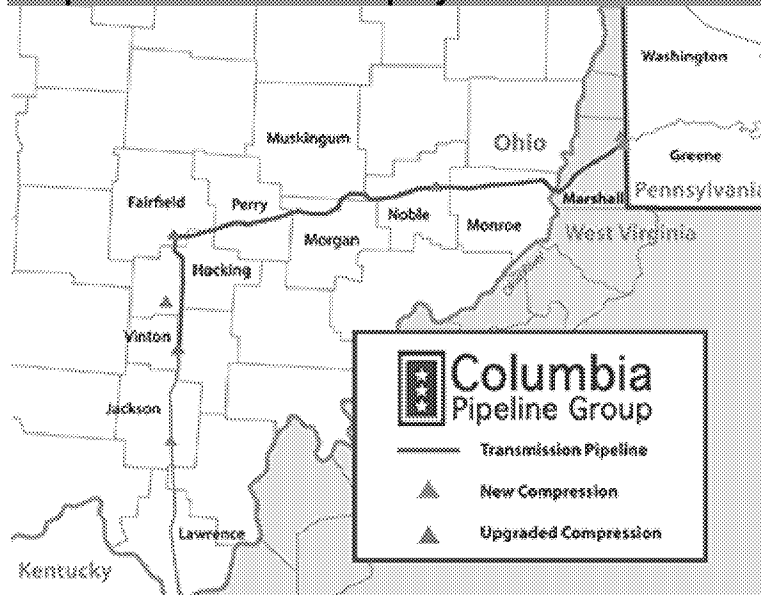
U.S. EPA this week [[HYPERLINK](#)

["http://www.eenews.net/assets/2016/10/13/document_gw_08.pdf"](http://www.eenews.net/assets/2016/10/13/document_gw_08.pdf)] the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for not thoroughly studying indirect greenhouse gas emissions when it [[HYPERLINK "https://www.ferc.gov/industries/gas/enviro/eis/2016/09-01-16-eis.asp"](https://www.ferc.gov/industries/gas/enviro/eis/2016/09-01-16-eis.asp)] an environmental impact statement for the Leach XPress project last month. Columbia Gas Transmission and Columbia Gulf Transmission, which TransCanada purchased in July, are seeking federal permission to build a compressor station and run 160 miles through production areas in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Kentucky.

EPA in June said FERC's review was "insufficient," suggesting further analysis of alternative routes, ways to protect forested lands and aquatic resources, and environmental justice as well as for the commission to conduct and include an analysis of greenhouse gases and climate change.

And yet the commission, EPA said, appeared to disregard the recommendations and concerns from three of its regional offices throughout the Mid-Atlantic in its final EIS. FERC declined to comment.

Proposed Leach XPress project



[[HYPERLINK "http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060044234"](http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060044234) \o "click to enlarge"]The \$1.4 billion proposed Leach XPress project would include the construction of about 160 miles of gas pipeline and compressor stations in southeast Ohio and West Virginia's northern panhandle. Map courtesy of the Columbia Pipeline Group.

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"We view FERC's response to our comments as very concerning in light of CEQ's GHG Guidance and request a headquarters level meeting with us to seek a definitive resolution to this matter before you publish a Record of Decision (ROD) and so that you do not continue to take this approach in additional [National Environmental Policy Act] documents," wrote Kenneth Westlake, chief of EPA's NEPA Implementation Section in the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

FERC's final EIS, Westlake said, didn't include estimates of the indirect greenhouse gas emissions from TransCanada's proposed gas project and its alternatives, including effects on gas production and the combustion of the fuel. After noting that FERC disagreed with EPA's call for the agency to calculate indirect emissions, Westlake picked apart the agency's reasoning.

"Combustion of the product is a reasonably foreseeable effect of this project, and falls squarely within the obligation to consider indirect impacts under NEPA," he wrote. "The CEQ GHG Guidance makes this same point, and uses the end use product combustion of fossil fuel as a specific example of the kind of indirect effect that should be considered under NEPA."

Westlake also took issue with FERC's decision to compare the estimated gas emissions from the gas project to state emission levels, saying such an approach is not "appropriate" given the stated intent of the CEQ guidance. "EPA recommends that FERC follow the approach outlined by the CEQ's Final Guidance and remove comparisons to aggregated emissions levels," he wrote.

EPA's sharp rebuke and request for a high-level meeting is an interesting development in light of former FERC Commissioner Tony Clark's comments in August that the "jury's still a little bit out" on whether the Obama administration's new climate change guidance would substantially affect federal reviews of natural gas infrastructure ([[HYPERLINK "http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060041264"](http://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1060041264)], Aug. 5).

Clark said the courts have consistently upheld the commission's environmental reviews of natural gas pipelines and export terminals under NEPA, and whether the new guidance could change that when environmentalists challenge the agency's decision in court is unclear. Clark, who has since left the agency, noted the guidance isn't binding and its fate may not become clear for years.

The EPA letter was hailed as a win for climate activists trying to stymie FERC's ongoing approval of natural gas pipelines, compressor stations and export terminals. The letter also drew a stiff defense from the project's developers.

"First and foremost, we want to assure all parties involved in the review of our proposed Leach XPress and Rayne XPress projects that we are committed to constructing and operating them in an environmentally responsible manner," said Scott Castleman, a manager for TransCanada's natural gas communications.

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Castleman said that for both projects, comprehensive environmental studies were conducted and results were provided in filings to FERC, including detailed air studies; information about wetland, stream mitigation and migratory birds; and other items pointed out by EPA.

Castleman noted that EPA has made similar comments on other projects, and that FERC, the lead agency, determines the level of environmental detail included in the EIS and meets the requirements of NEPA.

"It is also worth noting that the EPA has recently submitted similar letters on a number of other FERC applications," he said. "We will continue working with FERC and other parties to provide information as needed."

[HYPERLINK "http://m.journaltimes.com/news/opinion/editorial/journal-times-editorial-whether-dnr-or-epa-keep-the-state/article_d1d307aa-740e-58fb-ab6d-31cadb4f6f8d.html"]

Journal Times editorial: Whether DNR or EPA, keep the state's water clean
The Journal Times Editorial Board
Oct 17, 2016

Is there a problem in Wisconsin with lax enforcement of the federal Clean Water Act? Federal regulators spent some time in Madison last week to find out.

The regulators were in the Madison headquarters of the state Department of Natural Resources, scrutinizing files related to 47 water pollution permits the DNR has issued.

The Environmental Protection Agency probe is aimed at determining whether the federal government should take the extreme step of revoking the state's authority for enforcing those laws in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal reported Oct. 9.

Typically, states make changes to avoid the embarrassment of being stripped of their environmental authority, said Emily Hammond, a George Washington University law professor who co-authored a study of federal investigations like the one now targeting Wisconsin.

"There does seem to be ... kind of a matter of pride that they would rather keep it in their control rather than have it be taken over by the federal government," Hammond said.

So far, the Wisconsin case is moving more quickly than most, probably because it is based largely on previous citizen complaints and EPA scrutiny that produced a 2011 list of 75 water protection deficiencies the state was directed to fix within two years, Hammond said.

The EPA recently said it was satisfied that six deficiencies were remedied. It listed 11 in the early stages of rulemaking, and 18 as still needing "future" action, including five fixes

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DNR implemented without formal approval. The remainder are in a late stage of rulemaking or review.

Another factor that could help the EPA move quickly is a state audit released in June documenting shortcomings in DNR regulation of wastewater released by industry, sewage treatment plants and animal feedlots, she said.

“It’s a strange dance, but somehow the threat and the possibility that the state program could be taken over does seem to prompt action,” she said.

The Wisconsin petition was filed a year ago by the Madison-based environmental law firm Midwest Environmental Advocates and 16 state residents.

The nonprofit has taken the DNR to court over water pollution permits issued to concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) like the ones in Kewaunee County, where about one-third of tested drinking-water wells are contaminated by bacteria associated with manure.

If 1 in 3 well-water sources are contaminated, that sounds like a problem to us. State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, hasn’t heard from the EPA, but he is open to making statutory changes if they are needed to make state laws consistent with federal law, his spokeswoman Myranda Tanck said on Oct. 7. She said Fitzgerald wouldn’t comment on the DNR budget before seeing Gov. Scott Walker’s proposal, which is due early next year.

The state audit of DNR wastewater programs found that inadequate staffing was behind many problems. Elected officials have eliminated 15 percent of the department’s full-time staff in the last two decades.

Last month, DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp proposed shifting the equivalent of four positions to CAFOs, saying it would allow the DNR to properly regulate the feedlots.

The EPA considers its current investigation informal, the State Journal reported. The last time the state faced a loss of authority over a pollution program — in 2002, regarding air pollution — the EPA won the cooperation of Wisconsin’s elected officials only after putting them on formal notice.

Candidates for office, and their surrogates, make political hay out of blasting “Washington bureaucrats” and “interference from Washington.” One way to keep the federal government out of state-government business is to enforce federal laws.

Especially when it comes to clean water.

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/environment/strict-pesticide-rules-fail-to-erase-threat-to-wisconsin-s/article_2dfbc196-7f61-5d86-99bc-aef459b70bad.html

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During an Easter celebration in 2014, Jacob Reeves' body started swelling up. Then he developed an unusual rash. After multiple hospital visits, Jacob, now 11, was diagnosed with juvenile dermatomyositis.

It is a rare inflammatory disease that affects muscles, skin and blood vessels, afflicting just 3 out of every 1 million children each year, according to the American College of Rheumatology.

The cause of the disease is unknown, so Dawn Reeves went looking for answers as to why the second-youngest of their five children suddenly fell ill. She and her husband, Doug, started with the well at their home about 20 miles southeast of Madison.

Testing found the family's water was contaminated with fertilizers and pesticides. Most surprising was the weed killer atrazine, which has been banned from the area where the Reeves family lives for 20 years. It was found at twice the state and federal drinking water health standard.

Follow-up testing by the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection found 8.2 parts per billion of atrazine — nearly triple the state health standard — present in the water they drank every day.

In a letter, DATCP warned that "Long-term exposure to atrazine may cause a variety of health problems, including weight loss, heart damage and muscle spasms."

Reeves Family

When it comes to pesticides — including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides — in our water, the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism has found:

One-third of private drinking water wells in Wisconsin had pesticide contamination, according to the most recent comprehensive statewide survey;

Nearly two-thirds of the more than 90 pesticides used on Wisconsin crops lack a health standard for water;

Wisconsin's atrazine rules, which are described as the strictest in the country, have significantly cut use of the herbicide and led to a sharp decline in the number of wells tainted with atrazine;

But atrazine restrictions in Wisconsin have been replaced by increased use of other herbicides, whose effects on humans are still not well understood;

The federal government's proposal to further restrict atrazine is facing pushback from agricultural groups in Wisconsin and the state's Republican U.S. Senator, Ron Johnson.

Atrazine has been one of the most widely used herbicides in the United States for decades, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The pesticide manufacturer

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Syngenta advertises the weed killer as “safe for people, good for the environment and the economy.”

But atrazine is considered an endocrine disruptor and has been tied to abnormal sexual development in animals. The endocrine system regulates blood sugar, reproductive systems, metabolism and development of the brain and nervous systems.

Testing of the Reeves’ well also detected dangerous levels of nitrate, which comes from nitrogen-based fertilizers, and low levels of the pesticide alachlor.

The results convinced Dawn Reeves that Jacob’s sudden illness was caused by the water.

“It wasn’t a (three-in-one-million) rare disease, it was atrazine poisoning to the extreme,” Dawn Reeves said of Jacob’s sudden illness. “It blew (the doctors) away and all of their statistics out of the water.”

Although there is no direct evidence that supports her theory, the exact health effects of long-term consumption of water containing pesticides are “not completely understood,” according to the state Department of Natural Resources.

The agency says, however, that exposure could increase susceptibility to “certain diseases, including cancer.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is considering further restrictions on atrazine but has gotten strong opposition from agricultural groups, including some in Wisconsin. A recent EPA draft risk assessment found that atrazine is dangerous to a variety of plants and animals both on land and in water.

Sen. Johnson, R-Oshkosh, has called on the agency to explain the rationale for the proposed rules, which he said would impose “harmful restrictions on Wisconsin farmers.”

One-third of wells contaminated

The Reeves family is among the roughly 940,000 Wisconsin households that rely on private wells for their water. There is no testing requirement for private well owners, which means “everybody’s on their own” when it comes to water quality, said Stan Senger, DATCP’s environmental quality section chief.

The Reeves family is among the roughly 940,000 Wisconsin rural households that rely on private wells for their water.

Coburn Dukehart

By contrast, public water supplies are tested for 36 contaminants found in pesticides, including atrazine and alachlor. The EPA sets these standards, and monitoring is enforced by the state DNR.

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In 2007, the last time DATCP released a comprehensive survey of pesticides in groundwater, the results were disturbing. Of 398 private wells, 33.5 percent had detectable levels of a pesticide or a pesticide metabolite, which is formed when the active ingredient or “parent” chemical breaks down as it penetrates soil.

At the time, the agency tested for 32 active ingredients. DATCP is now updating the study and testing for 98 ingredients, Senger said.

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Wisconsin regulators have long known the dangers of atrazine. In 1991, the state put in place a rule that allowed DATCP to set maximum application rates and prohibit atrazine use outright in certain areas. There are currently 101 prohibition areas in the state covering 1.1 million acres. The last was added in 2011.

DATCP spokeswoman Donna Gilson said the most recent round of testing has detected some “very localized groundwater problems.”

Rather than create new atrazine-prohibition areas, which can take two years, Gilson said the agency has instead reached voluntary agreements with individual farmers near Spring Green and Reedsburg who agreed to stop using atrazine or simazine, a pesticide that share metabolites with atrazine.

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Citing harmful effects to animals, EPA's draft risk assessment proposes new restrictions that agricultural interests including the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association say would "effectively ban" use of the chemical in about 100 herbicide mixes.

The agency is recommending a maximum of 3.4 parts per billion of atrazine in surface water to protect plant and animal life, compared to the current level of concern of 10 ppb; opponents cite research that has found 25 ppb and higher to be safe. The Senate governmental affairs committee, which Johnson chairs, is examining the effects that the proposed EPA rules could have on farmers.

At a committee hearing Aug. 17, Jim Zimmerman, a Rosendale farmer and National Corn Growers Association board member, testified, "Without atrazine, farmers would have to use higher quantities of other herbicides that are less effective." He also predicted that lowering the threshold would increase tillage, which disturbs the land, "threatening soil health and nutrients."

Other countries have gone even further. Germany and Italy prohibited use of the chemical 25 years ago. The European Union banned it in full in 2004 — even in Switzerland, where Syngenta, the major producer of atrazine, is based.

Researcher: Regulation works

Joanna Ory was a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture pre-doctoral fellow at the University of California-Santa Cruz who studied Wisconsin's approach to atrazine. She found that use of the herbicide has plummeted in Wisconsin, as has contamination of wells by atrazine.

"The rules that Wisconsin put into place — to create the prohibition areas as well as having the application rate limits — are pretty progressive and are the strictest of any state in the country," Ory said.

When comparing 3,719 samples from 610 wells, Ory found contamination decreased steadily, from an average of 3 ppb in 1992 to 0.67 ppb in 2013. She concluded that "the atrazine rule in Wisconsin is a policy that has contributed towards strong improvements in water quality protection."

But the rule may not have been enough to protect the Reeves family. They live in the middle of a prohibition zone covering most of Dane County.

The 298-page DATCP investigation obtained under the state's open records law by the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism found no evidence of nearby farmers using atrazine, which has been banned in the area since 1995, and no neighboring wells testing positive for atrazine.

Officials were never able to find the source and closed the case.

"Could we have missed the point source?" Senger asked. "Certainly, it's not a perfect process, and you can't go out and poke a bunch of holes all over people's properties."

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But we certainly did not find a smoking gun for use in the area or for spills or anything like that.”

The water filtering system in the basement of Doug and Dawn Reeves’ home near Stoughton shows the efforts the couple has made to remove atrazine and other contaminants from their drinking water. The various components are intended to remove sediments, nitrates, volatile organic compounds, herbicides and pesticides.

Coburn Dukehart

Dawn Reeves said the good news is that the family has installed filters that take out the contaminants.

Atrazine falls, other herbicides rise

But Ory’s research has found that, in Wisconsin, decreased atrazine use has been accompanied by a large increase in use of other herbicides on corn fields, including glyphosate, whose health effects are unclear.

Ory said there may be negative synergistic effects if groundwater contains a “chemical soup” of pesticides. Wisconsin’s current groundwater law does not set a standard for total pesticides in water, nor is there a standard set nationally by the EPA. The European Union’s standard is 0.5 ppb.

As for the Reeves family, the dissolved organic carbon and reverse osmosis filtration systems they installed gave them some peace of mind. But it came at a high price.

Jacob’s treatment — a regimen of “wicked drugs” that Reeves described as fighting poison with poison — finally ended in August. She estimates the filters cost more than \$3,000; plus a family friend paid for six months of bottled water. Reeves said she even threw out most of the food she canned from her garden.

“I only cried once,” Dawn Reeves said of her son Jacob’s diagnosis with juvenile dermatomyositis: “When they said he might not walk again.”

Coburn Dukehart

Reeves said she is angry that all of the steps she and Doug took to protect their children may have been undermined by contaminated water.

“For us, we grew our own food,” she said. “We kept them at home and home schooled them. We did it all on purpose to try to keep our kids healthy. And then only to find out that despite everything we were trying to do to try to keep them healthier, that some poison in our water turned it all upside down.”

Reporter Tierney King contributed to this report. The nonprofit Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism (WisconsinWatch.org) collaborates with Wisconsin Public Radio, Wisconsin Public Television, other news media and the UW-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

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[HYPERLINK "http://www.effinghamdailynews.com/news/building_our_future/building-our-future-the-uncertain-future-of-illinois-fracking/article_a549e1ca-9546-11e6-aaec-7b8f5d268bd1.html"]

Building Our Future: The uncertain future of Illinois 'fracking'

- Tony Huffman / For the Daily News
- 4 hrs ago

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When oil prices dropped off in recent years, it put the practice of high-volume hydraulic fracturing on simmer in Illinois for the time being.

“Fracking” is an often controversial method of extracting oil and natural gas. The process increases production of the resources from underground rock formations by injecting fluids under pressures great enough to fracture the oil- and gas-producing formations, according the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Southern Illinois residents are still boiling over about how the debate over fracking played out. On the one hand, proponents in the oil industry feel slighted from a missed economic windfall when the state put a stop to the hydraulic fracturing, and regulations were later passed. On the other hand, environmental advocates contend the risks of fracking aren’t worth the reward.

“With Clay County unemployment like it has been, I would have loved to see fracking take off,” said Clay County Board President Ted Whitehead, who is still indignant that the window on fracking has closed for the time being with the drop in oil prices.

“Bigger companies thought there was a play down here,” Whitehead said. “People aren’t going to like that I say this, but the state got involved and slowed everything down with their regulations.”

Striking a nerve

Whitehead, who has worked in the oil industry for 40 years, said the issue has “struck a nerve on both sides.”

“The technology has come so far in this industry,” said Whitehead. “There has been a lot of misinformation put out by people who are against this.”

The lifelong Clay County resident said he doesn’t have any reservations about national reports of water contamination and earthquakes in states where fracking was prominent. He didn’t hesitate about the idea of fracking under his home.

“I wouldn’t have a problem with it,” said Whitehead.

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With existing land leases on property for fracking in Clay County and historical trends of returning oil prices and demand, Whitehead said fracking could return. But with the hit the oil industry took from the drop in oil prices and fewer regulations in other parts of the country, he said the region has lost out on an immeasurable amount money.

“Two of the biggest financial assets in this area are oil and farming,” said Whitehead, who noted the heritage of traditional oil wells in Clay County. “We definitely missed an opportunity.”

Decline

Chris Young, an Illinois Department of Natural Resources spokesperson, confirmed Whitehead’s contention about a loss of interest in fracking in southern Illinois, where the majority of fracking was to take place.

“Nobody has applied for a permit for high-volume hydraulic fracturing this year,” said Young.

Among the many restrictions, the Hydraulic Fracturing Regulatory Act prohibits drilling within certain distances of bodies of water and streams.

Tabitha Tritt, co-founded Southern Illinoisans Against Fracturing our Environment, has concerns about unsustainable energy in general, but especially with the risks involved with fracking.

She sourced some of the Environmental Protection Agency’s findings to support her anti-fracking stance. Tritt pointed to several studies when bemoaning the possible effects to drinking water and alleged seismic activity caused by fracking.

“The New Madrid is definitely scary,” said Tritt, referring to the large fault that was responsible for one of the largest earthquakes in North America’s history.

Her organization protested in Springfield against fracking, and she said the organization will continue to fight if fracking returns with a rebound in oil prices. To her knowledge, the farthest north fracturing has occurred thus far was near Stephen A. Forbes Lake in Marion County.

“Continuing to extract oil and gas and release carbon into the atmosphere is going to exacerbate climate issues,” she said. “We have to find more sustainable forms of energy.”

Ban?

Tritt would like to see an all-out ban on fracking in Illinois. She believes the EPA and IDNR were inept in handling an explosion in Wayne County on a hydraulic fracturing site in 2014.

“The whole thing was hush hush,” said Tritt.

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After filing for a Freedom of Information Act request about the incident, she contends information was blacked out in the report.

"I believe there are loopholes in these regulations," said Tritt.

Tritt said although there are regulations on the gallons of water that can be used for hydraulic fracking, she believes oil companies are likely tapping off of existing oil wells and use nitrogen and gas to extract oil through horizontal fracturing.

"The oil companies know how to get around the rules," she said.

Tritt, who lives in the Shawnee National Forest, said she has received significant negative response for her involvement in fighting fracking. She's disheartened by the idea that fracking could return if oil prices rise.

"I don't know why how they don't see that every decision has a consequence when it comes to the water and our earth," Tritt said.

Financial gain doesn't justify harming the world we live in, she said.

"Greed will be the ultimate demise of humanity," she lamented. "We want to put a monetary value on everything, but we can't put one on our drinking water and the earth."

[HYPERLINK "<http://www.morningjournalnews.com/news/local-news/2016/10/epa-called-for-oily-substance-in-east-liverpool/>"]

EPA called for oily substance in East Liverpool

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Oct 14, 2016

Environmental News Clips – Week ending October 21, 2016

Jo Ann Bobby-Gilbert

Staff Writer

jgilbert@mojonews.com



EAST LIVERPOOL — The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) was contacted Thursday by city fire officials after a woman's vehicle was found mired in an oily substance along Harker Avenue.

Fire Chief Bill Jones said the department was called by police about a woman stuck in her car, and they found Dayna Unger of New Manchester, W.Va., had pulled off the road into a lot between Cowan Masonry and the former Ferro plant, now the site of Pyramid Oil.

Jones said Unger told them she had been drinking the previous night and felt it was better to pull over and sleep.

When she tried to pull her car out Thursday morning, it was stuck in about 18 inches of a substance Jones said appeared to be oil field waste.

"Somehow it got dumped there. Whether it was the company (next door) or a passing truck who thought it was an opportune place to dump it, we don't know," Jones said, adding that Pyramid Oil is not claiming responsibility for the spill of what he estimated to be a couple hundred gallons.

The owner of the lot, Larry Petruzzi of Lisbon, who is also part owner of Pyramid Oil, was on the site and did not believe any of his employees would have left the 25-by-25-foot puddle of sludge, Jones said.

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Nonetheless, Petruzzi spoke with the EPA and was given permission to clean up the substance according to the agency's guidelines, and Jones said the regulatory agency considered it a small spill with none of the substance entering the storm drains since the cool weather solidified it.

Jones said the EPA was handling the situation over the phone with Petruzzi and will not make a response as long as the spill is cleaned up.

The EPA also notified the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, which has jurisdiction over fracking, according to Jones.

Unger's vehicle was still at the site Thursday afternoon, with the front end and wheels covered with the oily substance.

[[HYPERLINK "http://monticellotimes.com/2016/10/17/radiological-preparedness-exercise-scheduled-this-week-at-monticello-nuclear-plant/"](http://monticellotimes.com/2016/10/17/radiological-preparedness-exercise-scheduled-this-week-at-monticello-nuclear-plant/)]

Radiological preparedness exercise scheduled this week at Monticello nuclear plant

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By [[HYPERLINK "http://monticellotimes.com/author/thennagir/"](http://monticellotimes.com/author/thennagir/)]

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DPS-HSEM), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Federal Radiological Monitoring Assessment Center (FRMAC) will conduct a radiological emergency preparedness exercise around the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant this week (Oct. 17-21).

The Northern Lights exercise will involve helicopter flights between the areas of Monticello and Camp Ripley.

The helicopter may also fly over Benton, Cass, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena and Wright counties, stated a Minnesota Department of Public Safety news advisory issued this morning (Monday, Oct. 17).

The helicopter will fly at 150 feet (or higher) above the ground in a grid pattern during daylight hours only.

Residents should not be alarmed by the helicopter or other field personnel carrying out their duties during the exercise, the news advisory stated.

This exercise will take place at Camp Ripley. Some field activities may occur in communities around the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant and Camp Ripley.

Participating agencies will include Minnesota Department of Public Safety, the Minnesota departments of Agriculture, Health, Human Services, Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency Transportation, the Minnesota National Guard, Xcel Energy,

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operators of the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).